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[Date: Aug 2, 2005]

[Tracking #]

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PRESS RELEASE

Asian Environmental agency leaders to establish regional cooperation network on environmental enforcement

MANILA, PHILIPPINES (August 2, 2005) – Environmental agency leaders from 13 Asian nations today officially launched a regional practitioner network known as the Asian Environmental Compliance and Enforcement Network (AECEN) during a two-day regional workshop at the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Manila headquarters. Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Scott Bellard of the US Embassy, Reynato S. Puno, Senior Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines, and Michael T. Defensor, Secretary of the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources, presented remarks in support of the network.

Composed primarily of environmental agency managers and practitioners, AECEN promotes improved environmental compliance and enforcement policies and practices in Asia through counterpart exchange and information sharing. AECEN will function as a platform for Asian country members to share experiences and create innovative solutions at the national and regional levels.

While over the last two decades most Asian governments have developed legal and institutional frameworks to tackle environmental pressures from urbanization and industrialization, many countries have faced difficulties in implementing and enforcing laws and regulations. To address common challenges, government agencies are reaching out to counterparts in neighboring countries to share experiences. The primary focus of AECEN is to facilitate the development of improved policies and practices that lead to more effective enforcement of environmental laws to reduce pollution and other environmental ills.

"Environmental enforcement has become a top priority throughout Asia," said Dr. Supat Wangwongwatana, Deputy Director General for Thailand's Pollution Control Department and AECEN's Executive Committee Chair. "AECEN provides an important resource for government leaders, judges and other decision makers to share ideas in developing new solutions that protect the environment and promote the rule of law."

As part of the two-day meeting, Asian leaders issued a joint statement that establishes the new network, and commits agencies to work toward strengthening compliance with environmental legal requirements through regional cooperation. Building the technical, institutional and financial capacity of environmental agencies and inspectorates is a key objective of AECEN.



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“There is an urgent need for all countries, both developed and developing, to work together to devise innovative strategies for addressing regional environmental threats. Through networks like AECEN, Asian environmental leaders can achieve real breakthroughs in new environmental policies and practices,” remarked Mr. Timothy Beans, Mission Director of the United States Agency for International Development, Regional Development Mission/Asia.

Countries represented at the meeting included Bangladesh, Cambodia, People’s Republic of China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.

The foundation meeting for AECEN is a cooperative program of the Asian Development Bank and the United States Agency for International Development.

Both are providing direct funding support for the establishment and operation of AECEN. Other supporting organizations include the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources, United States Environmental Protection Agency, World Bank, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and International Network for Environmental Compliance and Enforcement.

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